


MEMORANDUM FOR: Bruce Clarke

Attached is the memo I mentioned. I will think some more about the Cardinal Issue phase and hope to send you another memo on this by Thursday morning.


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STAT

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Research Production Planning:Critique and ProposalsA. Critique

Although the new planning process probably yielded an improvement over previous procedures, it revealed a number of weaknesses that are more or less remediable.

1. Cardinal Issues To start with broad Cardinal Issues is indispensable. But (a) their formulation occurred too hastily and without sufficient inputs, (b) there was an unresolved problem of how to separate global from regional and country issues, and (c) there was and remains the question of whether "regular" or obvious issues (which the offices would do as a matter of course) should be treated along with "new" issues (requiring non-routine efforts). The "new" ones should be relatively few and receive special attention.

2. The productivity of the working groups differed a great deal. This depended mainly on the managerial ability, substantive competence and especially dedication of the chairperson. Secondarily, it depended on the composition of the groups in terms of representing different substantive and interdisciplinary competences.

The working groups were instructed to derive particular research themes within broad Cardinal Issue areas. Some groups did this well while others operated at too a high a level of generality. To the extent that the latter disposition prevailed, it was not clear to the offices what research exactly was called for.

3. Generally speaking, the offices spelled out the research tasks--especially their bread-and-butter work--which they intended to perform in any case. Other than that, the match between proposed researches and Cardinal Issues was not very good. The matching between the one and the other was often partial, tangential, by implication. One does not get the feeling that the office plans were seriously driven by the Cardinal Issues. In part, this outcome probably resulted from the fact that the offices had already conceptualized a program before the Cardinal Issues appeared on the scene.

4. When the working groups reassembled, their work was handicapped by computer information problems and sometimes by the fact that the abstracts of proposed office projects were insufficiently informative.

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5. The process did not work well in generating enough plans for inter-office research. Some other mechanism is required if more such work is to be undertaken.

6. The process also suffered somewhat by the lacking inter-office consensus on what is to be taken as "research" as distinct from current intelligence.

7. Finally, it is possible that not enough time was allowed for the planning process.

B. Proposal for the Next-Go-Around

Stages

1. Formulation of Cardinal Issues

They should be prepared by one person (or two or three). More inputs are needed. The offices and the NIC should be asked to present a list of routine issues which they will in any case address in terms of research. For "new" issues, inputs might be solicited from the offices, NIC (including the AG), and the SRP. In addition, it would be useful to solicit ideas from a group of outside generalist consultants (no more than 10) representing different disciplines, different ranges of expertise, and academics as well as suitable ex-consumers. They should be given a day to study the past year's production program and be asked, during a second day, to present additional issues to be addressed by intelligence.

2. Properly selected working groups would be asked to derive specific themes for research projects in the Cardinal Issues areas and do so with clarifying descriptions.

3. The DD/NFA should attach priorities to the research themes (to all or perhaps only to "new" projects) and also indicate those calling for inter-office research.

4. Office and NIC production planning. Office and NIC plans should indicate clearly the extent to which "new" issues and themes have been accommodated and, if not, the reasons for their failure to do so. They should also report on the extent to which proposed inter-office work was or was not being programmed. Finally, they should be asked to indicate clearly which researches are definitely expected to be done, and which represent secondary commitments.

5. Working groups reassemble to review office and NIC programs and report on gaps, redundancies, etc.

Time Frame

The total amount of time allotted to the process should be somewhat increased (perhaps by two weeks).

Instructions

Somehow instructions all along the line have to gain new height of clarity and insistence in order to insure that all parts operate in a uniform and desired manner in terms of what precisely is expected in each phase, on the format of computer inputs, and on what is meant by research for purposes of the exercise.



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